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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [KDEM](#) [PHUM](#) [PTBS](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: UPDATE #6: TIT FOR TAT - A SPATE OF KURDISH
SECURITY FORCES KIDNAPPINGS

REF: A. BAGHDAD 451
[B](#). BAGHDAD 413
[C](#). BAGHDAD 381
[D](#). BAGHDAD 375
[E](#). BAGHDAD 369

Classified By: Political Counselor Yuri Kim for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY. The KRG leadership remains fixated on the continued incarceration of three Wanna detainees, charged with assaulting the Ninewa governor and demands their immediate release. In apparent retaliation, unidentified Kurdish security elements - presumably Assayesh and/or Zervani - detained the Hamdaniya District Council Chair and his driver on February 17, as well as a Hamdaniya District Council member (and candidate for the March election). Of the 11 detainees seized by Kurdish security elements the previous day in Wanna (ref. A), five remain in custody. We have confirmed that PGOV Nujaifi's report that Nimrud District Mayor was abducted by Assayesh is false. USF-I confirmed that demonstrations and a utility workers' strike in Hamdaniya have not devolved into violence. Both Mosul KDP Chief and KRG Minister of Interior (KMOI) deny any knowledge of extra-judicial detentions by Kurdish Security Forces (KSF). KRG Intelligence Chief Masrur Barzani denied any KRG role in orchestrating abductions in Ninewa. The RRT Erbil Team Leader, Senior Advisor to Northern Iraq (SANI), Ninewa PRT Team Leader and USF-I continue to urge the KRG to release all extra-judicial detainees and press both sides to act decisively to restrain their respective security forces and restore calm. We are examining political approaches that may help de-escalate the situation. END SUMMARY.

ASSAYESH KIDNAPPINGS

[1](#)2. (C) On February 17, according to several sources that include PGOV Nujaifi and Hamdaniya District Major Nissan Marmoui, Kurdish security elements kidnapped Hamdaniya Council Chair Hussein Hamad Younis and his driver. On February 18, USF-N met with Zervani Commander Major General Aziz who did not deny the action and said he would provide an update on Younis' status. (Note: Hamdaniya is PGOV's home district. End Note.)

[1](#)3. (C) According to Shebak parliamentarian Henin Qeddo and Ninewa Provincial Council (PC) Security Committee member Abdul Raheem, Kurdish security elements broke into District Council member Sa'ad Suleman Abdullah's home on February 17 and are now holding him in the KRG or KSF-controlled territory of Ninewa. The independent Assyrian Christian mayor of Tal Kayf, Bassim Bello informed the PRT that 5 of 11 detainees abducted by Kurdish security elements on February 16 remain in custody in Sikrenn (Dohuk). PGOV and Bello supplied a list of the captives' names to the Ninewa PRT. On February 18, there was an unconfirmed report that 40

civilians who are PGOV's acquaintances were taken to Dohuk but were subsequently released. PGOV's February 17 report that Hamdaniyah District Mayor was abducted by KSF proved to be false. Iraqi Army reports on February 17 that KSF had abducted the Mayor of Nimrud were confirmed false/false by both the PRT and KRG Chief of Staff Fuad Hussein, who was responding to an urgent contact from SANI.

WHO'S IN CHARGE?

¶4. (C) Mosul KDP Chief Keshro Goran continued to show his frustration to PRTOffs at the news of additional "kidnappings" by Kurdish security elements, adhering to his story that KDP was not culpable and other divisions within KRG may be misbehaving.

¶5. (C) In a February 18 meeting with KMOI Karim Sinjari, Q5. (C) In a February 18 meeting with KMOI Karim Sinjari, SANI raised the issue of Assayesh detentions, noting that the actual detention of the four senior police officials in Tal Kayf caused a wave of rumored abductions by KRG security elements to appear credible. SANI provided KMOI with the names of six civilians reportedly detained by Assayesh or Zervani in Ninewa and taken to Dohuk, as well as names of the Hamdaniya Council Chair and his driver. SANI stressed that the latter two were reportedly taken by Zervani (police forces accountable to Ministry of Interior), and requested that Sinjari: a) ascertain the facts, b) engineer release of all detainees and c) ensure no further abductions. KMOI Sinjari denied knowledge of any extrajudicial detentions by Assayesh or Zervani. Although Sinjari agreed to investigate the cases and direct KRG assets to refrain from such actions, his body language remained negative. He warned again and

again that every day the remaining Wana detainees remain in jail the situation "becomes more complicated," and we could see "more of the same." He characterized the detentions by Kurdish security elements as tantamount to spontaneous reactions by "the people, who are angry." SANI rejected this, pointing out that these abductions are being carried out by an organized apparatus under KRG control, and are dangerous and provocative. SANI stated that more abductions, or reprisals of any sort, will just put more political leverage in hands not friendly to the Kurds.

¶6. (C) In a separate exchange with USG officials, KRG Intelligence Chief Masrur Barzani similarly denied any KRG role in orchestrating abductions in Ninewa Province. He asserted that any such actions were being carried out by individual Kurdish security elements without instructions from Erbil.

¶7. (C) COMMENT. KRG leaders remain fixated on winning the release of the three remaining Wana detainees from February ¶1. While not acknowledging that reprisal detentions by Kurdish security elements are being coordinated from Erbil, there is no visible commitment to halt extra-judicial detentions. Contrary to what the Kurdish leaders tell us, information from a range of sources indicates that the Kurdish street is not wrapped up in the Ninewa detainee situation. Public attention in the KRG is more focused on the election campaign, with headlines dominated by reports of PUK-Goran violence in Sulemaniyah. We will continue to emphasize rule of law and the principle of freedom of movement in addressing the Ninewa situation, but are examining broader political approaches, both with PGOV Nujaifi and the KRG to help de-escalate this situation. END COMMENT.
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